

SCIT presents

# MEN'S RITES : AN ALT-COMEDY

Elliott Program Center  
12-13 May 2017



**ADVISORY**  
**ADULT CONTENT**  
**WARNING**

# MEN'S RITES :

## cast

RUTH BADER GINSBURG	lizzy ten-hove
SARAH SILVERMAN	sienna kang
NANNY	hannah leblanc
GYNOPHILUS JONES DUCK DYNASTY	ted kelting
STEVE BANNON	david pickel
MILO YIANNOPOULOS	bobby pragada
JERRY FALWELL JR	kilian mallon
KELLYANNE CONWAY YODA	brandon bark
JAMES 'MAD DOG' MATTIS	peter shi
DUCK	duck

## chorus

hannah leblanc	robert shields
alyson melzer	carissa bark
sean o'grady	anne duray

# AN ALT-COMEDY

## crew

DIRECTOR	stephen sansom
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	ava shirazi
PRODUCER	alyson melzer
CHOREOGRAPHY	brittney szempruch
CHOREOGRAPHY	hannah leblanc
AUDIO ENGINEERING	stephen sansom
LIGHTS AND SOUND	brittney szempruch
PRESIDENT	alyson melzer
TREASURER	peter shi
SECRETARY	brandon bark

## translation team

matthieu abgrall, brandon bark, anne duray, kevin ennis, amanda gaggioli,  
kevin garcia, nick gardner, ted kelting, kilian mallon, alyson melzer,  
david pickel, stephen sansom, peter shi, brittney szempruch, verity walsh,  
and scott weiss

## lyrics by

ted kelting, hannah leblanc, alyson melzer, stephen sansom, ava shirazi,  
brittney szempruch, and lizzy ten-hove

## additional support from

corey bloom, kevin ennis, grace erny, nick gardner, dillon gisch, anja kriegler,  
ian tewksbury, martin valdez-vivas, verity walsh, rebecca sansom,  
and frankie jo sansom

## director's notes

(by stephen sansom, ted kelting, and alyson melzer)

The *Thesmophoriazusae*, first performed in Athens in 411 BCE, checks all of the Aristophanic boxes. Euripides, the dramatist Aristophanes loves to hate, has gotten himself into hot water. The women of Athens despise Euripides' "multi-layered" female characters (I see you, Medea), and are trying him *in absentia*. But this isn't just any trial. The case will be heard at the Thesmophoria, an annual festival which men are strictly forbidden to attend. Amid prayers for the fertility of Athens and its citizens, and access to (limited and momentary) political power as citizen wives, they make time to air their grievances against a playwright who so often gives them a bad name. Once Euripides gets word of this feminist plot, he enlists his elder kinsman to infiltrate the Thesmophoria dressed as a woman and speak in his defense. But the Kinsman sticks out like a sore...thumb, gets caught, and the escape attempts that follow all parody famous Euripidean tragedies.

The *Thesmo* offers many interesting potentialities and problems for contemporary adaptation. While we love dick jokes, rampant sexual innuendo, and a good anal depilation scene, there's a sense that Aristophanes wants his audience to laugh at the women and their complaints, not with them. So, at the beginning of our adaptation process we flipped the script: the festival-goers would now be men, and women (specifically Sarah Silverman as Euripides and Ruth Bader Ginsberg as his kinsman) would infiltrate their sacred man-space. Now men would be offering whiny, ridiculous complaints against women that we all can ridicule and have a good laugh at.

In *Men's Rites: An-Alt Comedy*, we swap the genders of the festival celebrants, shifting from disenfranchised woman at the Thesmophoria to power-wielding but plaintive men's rights activists at the exclusively male Bohemian Grove. The Bohemian Grove, a real, annual meeting of the country's richest and whitest men held up the

101 in Sonoma, perfectly recreates the Thesmophoria's gender exclusivity, sacred atmosphere, and political undertones. In true Aristophanic fashion, we take aim at those who lay claim to undeserving authority, be it the back-room dealings of elites or arguments spoken from cultural (male) privilege. And although we flip the script of gender, we keep all the bite—and, of course, the phalloi (for more on which see the tutorial below). We hope you enjoy your trip to the Grove!

### **A *Phalloi* Tutorial: or, How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the *Phallos***

(by stephen sansom)

The ancient Greeks could communicate a lot with a costume. But ancient costuming was not just the old frowny-face or young smiling mask (the first emojis?!?) or the toga. Greek comedy told the audience that a character was male by means of a certain protruding prosthetic belted to the character's waist, namely an absurdly large, priapic phallos. In our noble and purely academic desire to emulate ancient art and present it uncut to a modern audience, we follow suit by going full-frontal—in costume, of course.



## **bios**

**Brandon Bark**, 2nd year PhD, Classics (Kellyanne Conway, Yoda)

Brandon bent knees, gender, facts, and syntax before the altar of Comedy.

**Carissa Bark**, local talent (Chorus)

Carissa Melody Bark thanks her supportive family, and SCIT for allowing her to achieve her dream of shuffling awkwardly on stage in an uncoordinated song-and-dance number of a haphazard student production.

**Duck**, local duck (Duck)

Quack.

**Anne Duray**, 4th year PhD, Classics (Chorus)

Tiki Hut Mixtress: she will drown the patriarchy with Pink Drink.

**Sienna Kang**, 6th year PhD, Classics (Sarah Silverman)

æbleskiver

**Ted Kelting**, 4th year PhD, Classics (Gynophilus Jones, Duck Dynasty)

ted, v.1; Pronunciation: Brit. /tɛd/, U.S. /tɛd/ Forms: ME-15 tedd, ME-16 tedde, 15 teede, 16 tede, 15- ted. Etymology: Known from 15th cent.; apparently representing an Old English \*tēddan, cognate with Icelandic tēðja, past tense tadda, in special sense, to dung, manure, probably to spread (manure) or spread (the ground) with manure: see tathe v. The more general sense appears in Old High German, Middle High German, zetten to spread out, scatter < \*zatjan < Old Germanic \*tadjan. The non-appearance of this verb in Old and Middle English, and Low German and Dutch, is notable. 1. trans. To spread out, scatter (new-mown grass) for drying. Also

**Hannah LeBlanc**, 4<sup>th</sup> year PhD, History (Nanny, Chorus)

Better known by her stage name "Finn MacCool," Finn is excited to return to SCIT for her sophomore debut performance. Like her namesake, Finn is a quintuple threat of acting, singing, dancing, choreographing, mythical hunting-fighting talent. She's a legend of the stage. Or a giant. Your choice.

**Kilian Mallon**, 4<sup>th</sup> year PhD, Classics (Jerry Falwell Jr)

As a Mallon, Kilian is a member of the cucurbitaceae fruit family which includes squash, gourds, and loofahs. It has an oblong shape with stripes, white flesh that is juicy and sweet, and a seed cavity filled with small white seeds. Although most Mallons are yellow in color, there are variant cultivars of green or ivory colors. Killian Mallons are usually eaten fresh during the summer, and, with its thin rind and small seeds, can be eaten whole.

**Alyson Melzer**, 3<sup>rd</sup> year PhD, Classics (Producer, Chorus)  
ti esrever dna ti pilf nwod gniht ym tup l

**David Pickel**, 2nd Year PhD, Classics (Steve Bannon)

This is David's second year in SCIT, and even after all of the long days and nights learning lyrics and lines, rehearsing and practicing choreography, he finds once again that the hardest part of SCIT is writing this bio.

**Sean O'Grady**, Senior in Classics (Chorus)  
Yippie-Ki-Yay, Motherf\*\*ker.

**Bobby Pragada**, Sophomore (Milo Yiannopoulos)

Bobby was offered a wig for his role in this show, but for some reason he really, REALLY wanted to dye his hair.

**Stephen Sansom**, 5th year PhD, Classics (Director)

Now in his 5<sup>th</sup> year with SCIT, Stephen will soon amalgamate all previously published books, articles and blog posts into one grand collection, *There and BBQ Again: My Sojourn in the Bay Area's Most Necessary Food*.

**Peter Shi**, 2nd year PhD, Classics (James 'Mad Dog' Mattis)  
Peter Shi is Brandon Bark.

**Robert Shields**, Senior in Classics and Philosophy (Chorus)  
Scaramouche, Scaramouche, will you do the Fandango?

**Ava Shirazi**, 6<sup>th</sup> year PhD, Classics (Assistant Director)

After years of exile, Ava has returned to SCIT. During the intervening time, she successfully defended 4.5 dissertations, served as director of the US Board on Geographic names, and became the first to win both the Nobel Prize for Chemistry and a Grammy for best rap album in the same year. She is excited to direct SCIT again and looks forward to making the cast do a series of humiliating acts on stage in the name of theater.

**Brittney Szempruch**, 5th year PhD, Classics (Choreo, Tech Support)

Brittney is the sole intellectual property owner of every pita joke in this play.

**Lizzy Ten-Hove**, 4th year PhD, Classics (Ruth Bader Ginsburg)

Born in 1933, Lizzy was shortly thereafter involved in a terrible accident—special relativity, a Daily Planet reporter, and all that jiving around. On her return to earth she became a medium and went through years of psychoanalysis with the spirit of Sigmund Freud. Herr Freud asked her to thank the directors for replacing his analysand's penis envy with a sudden castration complex.

# ***Special Thanks to***

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## **About SCIT**

Stanford Classics in Theater strives to promote understanding of and engagement with classical theater through original research, rehearsal, and production. We hope to bring together students from various academic backgrounds and interests, primarily among the graduate students of the Department of Classics, but also including undergraduates, faculty and others from the broader Stanford community. Visit [scit.stanford.edu](http://scit.stanford.edu) for more info.